Fieldwork in the Kalahari

Nicholas L England

If I ever doubted it—and I really cannot think that I did, I am convinced after the talk that has gone on here that the level of culture at which the people under investigation exists is the primary factor governing methodology in an ethnomusicologist's work. And I believe that is the essence of what I am trying to say in the following account of my fieldwork in Southern Africa.

My aims were 1) to- find the music made by Bushmen,[1] 2) to get into it as a musician; and 3) to add my experience to the corpus of information about Bushmen in the hope that it would help perhaps to reveal something about both music, in general, and Bushmen. Naturally, as a further aim I want to preserve Bushman music as I know it so that the next one to come my way in his research will have fewer problems than I have encountered in the search for dependable reports on musical practices of the !Kxṓ[2] and some of their neighbors in the mid-twentieth century. New, when I say !Kxṓ in surroundings such as these, I always feel a compulsion to talk a bit about the Bushman themselves. And since I have said that the level of culture is so paramount an influence on methodology, I trust you will allow a short account of the people among whom I worked.

As a result of intrusions by other peoples—Bantu, Hottentots, and Europeans, the Bushmen have been effectively exterminated from the southernmost reaches of that vast area of Africa from the Zambesi south (perhaps even more northerly areas, as well), which they had inhabited for perhaps more than a thousand years. Those not destroyed altogether were either subjugated by conquering groups and subsequently absorbed by them, or expelled from the more desirable areas and forced from all sides into the hard lands of the Kalahari Desert.

The Kalahari is a great sand plain—not really a desert in the sense that we think of deserts—located in western Botswana, but overlapping toward the south into the Cape Province of the Republic of South Africa, and toward the west and north into Namibia. It is there that most remaining Bushmen live, though Bushman-land does extend beyond the limits of the Kalahari into Angola and northeastern Botswana. There are in all well over 50,000 Bushman according to a fairly recent estimate.[3]

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[1] Garfias Note: England in his paper on the Kalahari refers to Bushmen whereas today most might prefer to use the general term San to refer to the peoples of the Kalahari. I have left his usage as is; however, I have changed his reference to South West Africa to the current Namibia, and Bechuanaland to Botswana.

England used only International Phonetic Alphabet orthography in his paper and rather than interpret which form of the many possible Romanizations of the San script he might have preferred, I have left his original as he entered it.

[2] *!Kung* and *!kun* are the common spellings of this word in ethnographic literature. After much thought and discussion with informants and interpreters—especially Kernal Ledimo, the excellent interpreter who has worked with the Peabody-Harvard Expeditions for years, I have come to the conclusion that !Kxṓ is the proper spelling, the o̲ being of the very closed variety easily mistaken for u̲. All Bushman words are written here in the alphabet of the International Phonetic Association, modified only to include the traditional click symbols (footnote 5). ' indicates glottal stop. Bushman words are printed here without italics or underlining because of the possible interference with the phonetic symbols.

[3] See Phillip V. Tobias, "On the Survival of the Bushmen, with an Estimate of the Problem Facing

It is probably necessary to say here, however, that Bushmen are not the only inhabitants of the Kalahari. In the central and southern portions there are Kgalagadi—Bantu who practice agriculture and keep goats; some of them have cattle, as well. In the northern portion of the desert there are Tawana and Herero (and Mbandieru) cattle owners who also cultivate crops. Along the Okavango River, the northeastern boundary of Namibia, there are Gove (Mbukusu), Gcereka, and Kwangari[4] —a congeries of Bantu tribes about which there is very inadequate information in the literature. These tribes filter down into the northern Kalahari of Namibia and Botswana. They are agriculturists and fishermen. So it is that most Bushmen live their lives in varying degrees of contact with Bantu, very few, if any Bushman groups existing in total isolation from other peoples.

Until recently, all Bushmen were thought to belong to one language family, which could be divided into three groups: Northern, Central and Southern. Since the standard literature generally employs this classification,[5] I will do so here for convenience. Most Southern Bushmen are now extinct; the few survivors have little opportunity to pursue their traditional ways of life, being in service either to Bantu or European farmers on the southern periphery of the Kalahari. It is among the North and Central Bushmen that I have done field work, and of that, the majority, was done among those !Kxő (Northern Bushmen) who, though not completely devoid of contact with Bantu, have in some localities managed to maintain a fair degree of independence from such external influence.

The click consonants that I am using are distinctive elements of Bushman languages, as you all know. (However, Hottentot and several southern Bantu languages also employ clicks). There are four clicks in Northern and Central Bushman: a dental, an alveolar, a palatal, and a lateral. [Demonstration] And the Southern Bushmen also employ a fifth, and the nicest one: a bi labial "kiss" click.[6]

!Kxő, as most all Bushmen, are non-literate hunters and gatherers. The !Kxő inhabit the northwestern reaches of the Kalahari and some portions of Angola. They are organized in bands of from twenty to fifty persons. Each band, according to inherited rights, hunts and gathers food and gets its water within a traditional territory from which other bands are excluded, at least for purposes of procuring food and water. Movements of the game, ripening of the natural food crops, and the relative conditions of the water holes in the area determine the seasonally nomadic movements of the band within its territory. Bands intermarry, and as a result large regions may be united in kinship, such as the Nyae Nyae area of Namibia, to which I shall return in a moment.

Visiting that comes as a result of these kin relationships between bands makes for a wide sphere of friendship and acquaintance, and it therefore provides an easy channel through which elements of culture can be interchanged. Even those !Kxő bands that inhabit more remote areas In the bush interior are likely to receive, by chain reaction, influences from foreign cultures which their relatives and friends living nearer the periphery of the region contact personally.

Nyae Nyae[7] is one of the remote areas. Its inhabitants speak !Kxő dialect called ʖű’|wasi by those who have worked in the area, because that is what the people call themselves. It means "just people"[8] as opposed to "strange" or "other people"

Anthropologists," *Africa* XXVI (1956), (174)-186, especially pp. 183-84.

[4] In the spelling of all Bantu names given here, I follow the usage of Isaac Schapera, the noted authority of the Bantu of South Africa; see I. Schapera and D.F. van de Marwe, *Notes on the Noun-classes of some Bantu Languages of Ngamiland,* Communications from the School of African Studies, N.S. No. 2 (Cape Town, 1942), passim.

[5] See, e.g., J.A. Engelbrechtm ed. *A Bushman Dictionary*. By Dorothea F. Bleek, American Oriental Series, Vol. 41 (New Haven, 1956), pp. (vii-viii).

[6] The clicks are written as follows: dental, ǀ; alveolar, ǂ; palatal, !; lateral, ||; and bi-labial, ʘ.

[7] For a map and discussion of the Nyae Nyae area, see Lorna Marshall, "Marriage among !Kung Bushmen," *Africa* XXIX (1959), 335-336.

[8] Elizabeth Marshall Thomas translates the word as "harmless" (in contradiction to the adjective that Bushmen use for non-Bushmen, *dQri*, which can mean bad or harmful) in her sensitive and eloquent book

(Ƽu dbri). Many of the bands of the area follow what is thought to be tradition modes of Bushman life for at least a greater part of their time. On the other hand, some bands do live in contact with Bantu farmers on the edges of the area.

It was because of these considerations that the Peabody-Harvard Kalahari Expeditions chose the Ƽŭ́’|wasi of Nyae Nyae as the central subjects of their studies. They began their exploratory work in 1950 and by 1952-53 they had settled down in Nyae Nyae for an extended period of time to concentrate on the culture of those Bushmen. Subsequent trips continued the work there and eventually broadened the study to include bands of Bushmen in all three language groups.

The collecting of musical data began seriously in 1952; and by 1957, when I joined the group to work on the music, there were well over a hundred hours of tape recording and sound-sync film (along with hundreds of still photographs) devoted to Ƽŭ́’|wasi life. It was my task to order the musical data already collected and formulate some of the problems that needed to be solved, I had a great amount of the actual sound phenomena before me. I had also the ethnographic notes of Lorna Marshall, ethnographer for the expeditions, and photographs by John and Laurence Marshall[9] to introduce me to the cultural settings of the musical sounds.

I was fortunate in having these materials in my preparation for work among the Ƽŭ́’|wasi. The published literature on Bushmen is fairly extensive by now. It includes works by early travelers, missionaries, officials of the various governments, and lately, social and physical scientists. But, helpful though it may be regarding certain historical and cultural aspects of Bushmen music, the literature yields next to nothing in the line of the sounds or the structure of the music itself. Only in the works of Percival Kirby[10] is there to be found any serious handling of Bushman music, and of that, only Southern Bushmen have been examined in any depth—you remember that I said they are now extinct or so acculturated as to be almost out of the Bushman picture, in a sense.

However, I joined the Sixth Peabody-Harvard Kalahari Expedition in 1958,[11] armed at least with as much information as I could retain from the literature, and I did have the advantage of what I thought to be a fairly good preliminary grasp of the music I was going to study. All of you here will know how poor my grasp actually turned out to be—how misleading the recordings had been, or more correctly, how misleading I had allowed them to be.

The first field trip afforded me the opportunity to take what I consider an ideal approach to the music of a non-literate people such as the !Kxŏ́. There were three bands of Ƽŭ́’|wasi living together fairly consistently in one of the mangetti (*Ricinedendron rautanenii*) forests—common ground to them in their three separate band territories—collecting the mangetti nuts that form one of the staples of their diet. They were all, except the newly born, old acquaintances of the Harvard Expeditions from earlier years. They were quite accustomed to the prying cameras and microphones, so that my entree was already prepared, as it were.

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about the Ƽŭ́’|wasi and the |Gwikhwe (Central Bushmen of Botswana), *The Harmless People* (New York, 1959).

[9] As director of the Peabody-Harvard Kalahari Expeditions, Laurence K. Marshall has been for the past decade, and more, the moving force behind a host of Bushman studies. With his boundless energy, his knowledge of the field, often his own money, and above all, his profound dedication to the project, he has led social and physical scientists as well as many others into the Kalahari to pursue various aspects of Bushman culture. Among the most fruitful results of his efforts, there are the splendid works of his own family: the ethnographic writings of his wife, Lorna Marshall, op. cit.—see also *Africa* XXVII (1957), XXX (1960), XXXI (1961), and XXXII (1962), with much more yet to come; the book of his daughter Elizabeth Marshall Thomas, op. cit.; and the singularly excellent color film by his son, John Marshall, *"The Hunters"* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1958), distributed by Contemporary Films, Inc. of New York.

[10] See especially "The Musical Practices of the |?auni and ǂkhomani Bushmen, "Bantu Studies X (1936), (337)-431 and pls. 1-10.

[11] I wish to acknowledge here, with gratitude, the Foreign Area Training Fellowship of the Ford Foundation which made my first field trip possible; also the subsequent grant to help me continue to work.

For four and a half months I could observe !Kxṍ musical practices as they occurred in very nearly the natural cultural framework. I say "very nearly" because it is my opinion that any foreign presence, no matter how familiar, must be considered a potentially disturbing element in a non-literate society. It is here that the difference in cultural type or level, whatever we may choose to label it for convenience—high, low, civilized, or what you will, is most likely to be felt by the musicologist with regard to his approach. My experience among non-Western cultures is regrettably limited, but I think that the position of the musicologist becomes somehow less tenuous with regard to the work at hand as the culture level of the people under examination becomes, and I will simply use the word, "higher."

I can imagine, for example, that the musicologist in Japan, as a foreign element in that culture (which he is), could get to his work tight away at least in some form. For even though his presence might disturb the people, the music itself could continue to function because it exists at some level of abstraction in the minds of its makers. Furthermore, this might hold true to a certain extent in folk music traditions of higher cultures. (We have left that fieldwork completely out of this Symposium, and perhaps we should).

Not so, however, in the culture of the ƽṹ’|wasi. Their music does not exist, I believe, except in the making of it. If because of a foreign presence, they do not make music when and as they normally would, then how is the musicologist to know of it? Obviously he can miss whole repertories of song if by being there he so disturbs the natural order of things that the people cannot, according to their group conscience, allow the songs to be sung. The matter of secret and exclusive songs is difficult all over the world, I am sure, but it becomes a particularly thorny problem when the society under observation functions at this level. Let me illustrate by giving an example of how I failed, largely, to solve one of the problems in Nyae Nyae.

Several of the young men of the bands were of the age to be initiated into manhood when I was first there. The proper time for T~~ʃom~~a, the initiation ceremony, arrived and passed while the expedition continued to do its work. It was a frustrating experience for all of us—Bushmen and non-Bushmen alike. The relationships among us were of the best. I mentioned earlier that those bands were old friends of the Expeditions. Yet, the Bushmen could not bring themselves to perform the T~~ʃom~~a in its legitimate setting outside the *werf*, or village, in the bush.

And I believe it was more complicated than merely revealing esoteric songs. They are not that esoteric, and besides, the men had sung before and did sing again for me and other members of the expedition all their T~~ʃom~~a songs. But not in their correct setting. It was more than just forbidding non-initiates to hear the music, for the site chosen to make the T~~ʃom~~a ceremony is not far removed from the *werf*. Women, strictly excluded from the site of initiation and from its paraphernalia, on pain of sudden and supernaturally implemented mysterious sickness, can easily hear the songs from their home fires.[12] It was, then, that the men could simply not have me out there with them to hear the music in its real context.

The songs the boys learn at T~~ʃom~~a are closely involved with the medicine songs sung for the curing ceremonies in the *werf*, so you can see why it was a great disappointment to me. The singing of the name songs under the prescribed conditions brings about an appearance from the god who handles these affairs and in some may activate the proper medicine of those songs for the initiates to have and use later throughout their lives. Most of them will be medicine men at one point or another thereafter.

We were all wretched. The boys needed the ceremony; I wanted the music. They could not bring themselves to ask us to leave. I had other repertories of the music to pursue, and I was not about to leave. When our conversation turned to T~~ʃom~~a, we simply smiled weakly at each other and made do with the situation. However, the ƽṹ’|wasi always got something of the upper band when they would say in a way that chilled me,

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[12] Indeed, it seems to me that this is one of those instances in which music is used as a social control by periodically hearing the songs and imagining (but not witnessing) what is happening out in the T~~ʃom~~a werf, the women are reminded of the power, perhaps the superiority, of their men.

"Oh, the T~~ƒom~~a, we will make it another time after you have gone."

It was a loss, then—fortunately not a total one, for the practice sessions held in the *werf* gave me a chance to get at the songs and dances in some degree at least. Recordings of such practice sessions were already in the collection from earlier years, so there were musical data to compare. However, I do not know what really happens to the sounds of the music when the T~~ƒom~~a god makes his visit; perhaps I shall never know.

But to return to what I have called the (to me) ideal approach to a non-literate people's music. We stayed with the Bushmen, following them around as they moved to their different crops, their different water holes. And I, for my business, was watching the music happen, checking for any absolute lacunae in the recordings already collected and filling them as I could. Eventually there came a time when I felt sure enough of the music, when I decided most of the music had on recorded in its natural setting and in many different versions at many different performances.

I then called upon the Bushmen to help me in pre-arranged studio conditions (insofar as studio conditions are possible in the Kalahari—the winds are always a problem) for analytic recordings of the songs to help me remember what I was learning about the music. It was, for example, necessary to isolate separate vocal lines in the big polyphonic complex that the women build up in their dance-songs in order to ascertain more clearly the range of possibilities for individual improvisation on the basic themes of those songs.

A multi-microphone arrangement was indicated, and with the expedition's Ampex 600s it was possible to have two channels. I chose to plant a stationary microphone to receive the general complex of sound at all times, and with another microphone, I moved from singer to singer as the song progressed, bringing each one in turn out over the general sound for a number of repetitions of the musical period, then allowing her to retreat into the over-all polyphonic complex. If a singer was clapping one of the special patterns at the time to embellish the rhythmic background of the song, the close-up of that was taken also (Demonstration Recording).[13]

I have been going through the songs collected to date, trying to determine the limits beyond which improvisation on a given musical line no longer fills the requirements of that line and becomes, therefore, incorrect usage for the particular song being sung. From the recording you can get the idea: the way it changes and why it must be studied as it is happening. Because of the constantly changing complex, analysis is difficult. What is the limit to which they can go, and beyond which it becomes another song? The women will not talk about it, of course. Or let me put it more correctly: I have not been able to formulate the questions well enough to make them think and talk about these matters on which they do not, apparently, intellectualize. I think this recording was a kind of failure.

[*Comment by Robert Garfias: "I fail to see the failure."*]

Well, I will tell you why. Basically it is because the recording was not taken at an actual dance where the social situation so strongly influences the music and vice versa. When the medicine men are working powerfully and splendidly, the women's vocal complex takes on a wholly different luster from what you hear on this recording. Now, that luster results from the combined vocal lines of the several individual singers (also from other elements, of course—the medicine-man's vocal interjections and curing shrieks; the dancers leg-rattles pounding away). Each woman is motivated by the entire dance event; she embellishes her vocal line accordingly and thus changes the entire polyphonic complex. In this recording, on the other hand, there was clearly quite another motivation: the women's vanity.

Some of them, not all (and not always in later recordings) took advantage of the solo microphone to soar away in vocal flights that in themselves clearly indicated more and better ranges of possibilities for improvisation, as it were, but often had little to do with the actual song. They were overcome by the fact that they were on microphone. Furthermore, they were quick to grasp my plan, of course, and they wanted to be helpful. Seeing that I wanted to record around the circle to each singer in turn, they (wanting to be helpful) would sing until I came to the end of the line; then they would stop. I had no chance to go around again and again as the vocal complex waxed and waned; at it might in a typical performance of the song. They thought they had done their business, and they wanted it to be very neat and precise.

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[13] This recording was made with the help of Robert C. Gesteland of Boston, Massachusetts, electronic technician for that expedition and Robert G. Gardner, Director, Film Study Center, Peabody Museum, Harvard University.

The recording should have been taken at a real dance. What is more, it should have been done with several stationary microphones recording onto separate tapes. (Personally I hold to the idea of several tapes instead of multi-track single tape because of editing problems). All of our joint efforts at that session are recorded on the master tape, to be immutable thereafter except for the limited possibilities of manipulating the signal through the use of filtering devices. Inevitably the full vocal complex is compressed when the solo singer comes into the foreground. It is virtually impossible to hear what the others are singing at that time; thus it is impossible to know how the overall change in the texture of the song is happening. And remember, this piece might last twenty minutes—the whole dance going on for the full evening until dawn next day.

If each of, say, six microphones were feeding its respective signal onto one tape and the six tapes were moving at the rate of speed on one spindle, then the results would be eminently capable of analysis. Merely by turning down or out any two, three, or all of the channels, one could know what was going on at any given moment could come back in to the full complex and know there would be very little margin for error.

And let me say here, I think of one thing we could do together; it has something to do with technique in outline of work. We could put our minds to the peculiar problems that arise in our respective work among various peoples and pool our knowledge to develop machines that would help. It is not idealistic to think that someday we can have these things. If the machine does not exist, it can be built. It might cost $85,000, but that $85,000 will come if we put our combined efforts into it.

To return once more to Nyae Nyae: my sojourn with the 200 ʒṹ'|wasi was of course not long enough to be ideal but it was very near the ideal situation. In subsequent trips, I have used what I call a crash approach, and I do not think it has been totally ineffective. You recall that I told you about Bushman visiting habits and in many areas, the inter-dwelling Bantu. There are no useful reports on the musics of those Bantu groups, and I felt that I must have something with which to compare if I ever did come to know !Kxṍ music.

So I returned to Nyae Nyae for short periods—two months, three months—to check on my work with them earlier. Each time I would try to find out from the ʒṹ'|wasi what has happened since the last trip, and I would get recent performances of songs already in the collection. But mostly, I crashed into neighboring peoples, wildly learning and recording what I could in a short time. It varied from a week to five weeks in a place, and as I say, the approach was not unsatisfactory. Having learned the clues from the !Kxṍ music, I could often cut corners and be more efficient. I knew more, and I was also more brash. I would do anything (within reason) to get to the music, so much did I want materials for comparative work. And along this line, let me add quickly that although none of us here would condone indiscriminate recordings as a common practice, I have at times longed for any recording at all—even the most indiscriminate—from that vast area in southern Africa in which I work.

I will close with a few words about the presentation of my Bushman materials to you and to other people who might want to use it. Regarding music notation, I stick to the staff-line notation in which I was educated and which still is most meaningful to me. And I believe it will work. However, in presenting a piece such as the dance-song you have heard, there is the matter of sheer length. To notate this piece in full score (say it lasts twenty minutes), even with a ninety-channel melograph, would take a large part of my life. And there is the rest of that evening's dance music to consider. I have, therefore, found more useful and practical a sort of distilled version of each piece. I write out in score the several lines (each with variant possibilities) of the repeated musical period with verbal directions for entries, embellishment, tempo changes, and the like. Pitches, per se, mean nothing in my notation; it is only their relationship to each other that is valid. For in many Bushman songs the general pitch level will rise as the performance progresses. When the high singers reach their range limit, they merely drop to a lower part and continue the general pitch rise. By the time the twenty or thirty minutes of the performance have elapsed, the whole pitch level will have passed upward through an octave twice or more times. Notation of such music is a challenge. I would welcome your advice in the matter.

Discussion Following Nicholas England's Paper

I. Analysis of Rhythm in Bushman Music

Malm: Are those asymmetrical rhythms?

England: Yes. They are not exclusively asymmetrical. They will be irregular. A great variety of them, too.

Hood: Do you find this asymmetry in the vocal repertoire?

England: Yes. This is, in the length of the period. It will be a 21-beat phrase, or a 7-beat phrase. This can also be a 4-beat phrase. You can't limit it to one. But there is that predilection over all for a kind of asymmetrical structure among Bushmen.

Powers: They don't actually count these lines.

England: No, this is just my terminology. It's just saying it doesn't dome back in four beats, it comes back rather in seven, or in a combination of five or two or something. Just from my on analytic approach.

Powers: Is there any preference or predilection among these people for lengths of a particular kind?

England: Yes, there is a predilection for lengths in ten, for instance. But I, for notational purposes, divided it into two fives.

Powers: Any others?

England: Yes, there is sort of a regular four. Very regular and very uninteresting by contrast to this kind of thing, but there are more of those than there are of the others.

Powers: I would think that, from what you say, every phrase seems to have two parts. In other words, the basic bilateral symmetry of the human being is represented. Sometimes he steps a little heavier on his left foot than he does on his right. I was thinking that everybody's left foot is a little bigger than his right foot, or vice-versa. I mean that you can have something that is bilateral without necessarily being equal. It still will give you the left-right feeling, only you are limping a little bit.

England: Well, curiously enough, they do. I don't have a big enough sampling now of some songs which are in a kind of asymmetrical limping down the dusty road. They will show how he walks with a kind of a limp. So there might be a kind of correlation in their mind there. I don't have a big enough sample, but I do have about five songs.

Hood: We have a two-channel set-up in the laboratory. We found it extremely useful. Last year we did an experiment and were very successful. There has never been a recording of interlocking patterns of Balinese drumming. They are really pretty fast. So we rigged up two Balinese drummers at a distance of thirty feet maximum, each with his own mike. We shielded them so the two mikes would not pick up one another's sound, and we put a player of the main melody in between the two, so they had a melodic index. Then we recorded these two drummers on the two channels. We can hear either part or we can hear the composite. When we put them on the Melograph, we have a notation for either part or the composite. This is the first, so far as I am aware, direct and immediate notation of two Balinese interlocking drummers.

Kishibe: Do they have the idea of the conscious controlling of the pitch?

England: I think not. My feeling is, and I am staying away from it, because I haven’t had time thus far, still being in the descriptive and analytical process of the whole music, trying to get that first. But as a later study, I have the feel it has to do with the size of the intervals they sing. So that in the singing of a phrase of the piece, you would use a smaller interval or a minor third, instead as I would sing that normally here (demonstrates). And each time you might return, that smaller interval might cause you to go up. I think if that could be measured, the actual size of the temperament scale, that we might find out. And of course there is just the normal excitement of moving up.

Maceda: How about the rhythm, is it really regular, or is there some delay in it?

England: Always straight. Oh, now the man will dance against that, and he has leg rattles on and these will make a noise. He is not on this recording, because he wasn’t around, but I know the dance so I can help. My only interest there was purely selfish, to help remember when I got back because I can’t do it in the field.

Maceda: I don't know the impression of what you’ve got there, but it seems to me that in some of the clapping, every other is delayed.

England: No, that is very steady. What you are hearing is this one….

Maceda: No, the first one. It’s not quite regular.

England: You are sure it is that clear? If I had two microphones, you would know.

Maceda: Probably.

England: You go ahead and clap evenly.

Maceda: I will clap evenly. I am hearing this one somewhat delayed.

II. Field-Work Problems

Malm: When you have these secret things, when you are not supposed to be in there and it bothers them, can remote control ever work? Can you leave the microphone there? I don't mean secretly. I mean that the taboo would be on the individual rather than the paraphernalia. I would openly ask them if you could just leave the microphone there and go away.

England: I discussed that one time as a possibility, but they felt that "thing" was me, that it represented me. We did get to this problem in a way, because of these practice sessions. They allowed me to do that. That is the curious relationship about this secret business. It is not that secret. It is just that the actual situation is when it comes.

Powers: Just the arrival of the god, that they don't want you to be present at.

England: I think so. Because they know that I am more rational about these things, they are afraid that I might invalidate what they have tried to propagate all these years. I am still a giant white man, and they always know. So that if I sit in the wrong spot with somebody I shouldn't, he can do that, because he is, after all, crazy. He is here doing that business. They are very nice about it, always knowing that I am different in the end.

McAllester: This is a nice point to bring up about the participant-observer role. We anthropologists might make it sound too formidable, as though we really became whatever this group is. Obviously we don't. In a way we are luckier than the members of the community, because we can slip in and out of it to certain degrees. There are all kinds of limitations. Sometimes it can be terribly embarrassing. They decide they want you to marry somebody. I heard of somebody who was studying gypsies and was told by the local gypsy king that he had found a wife for him. He had gotten to participate much more than he wanted. When he said he couldn't make the marriage, the king was extremely embarrassed and the whole study had to be knocked off.

England: This is, incidentally, about field technique. One thing I should have added is the fact that as much of the work must be done in the field as possible, I have decided. To sit and do actual transcribing of things in the field would be the ultimate aim.

McAllester: I want to say amen to that, doing some of your analytical work in the field. What Allan mentioned about departing for a vacation, and then coming back, this makes a tremendous effect in many social contexts. The fact that you did return. Also, the fact that you gave them a rest, and yourself a rest. On that rest you could be writing out some of your material. The theoretical perception that occurs then, when you're still able to go back and check things, is just beyond words.